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ABSTRACT

The College of Marin has adopted a model of collegial governance that involves the entire campus community in recommending policies and procedures that determine the rules by which employees and students live. The model, which was designed by a task force representing faculty, staff, and students, is based on the U.S. Government model of executive, legislative, and judicial branches. Its major components are an Academic Senate, a Classified Senate, a Student Senate, and a Senate Executive Board. Each of the three Senates has two major roles: (1) to review and recommend District policies and College procedures; and (2) to recommend appointments from its membership to College governance committees. The Senate Executive Board is composed of an equal number of representatives from each of the three Senates. Proposals for new or changed policies or procedures travel through a number of committees before reaching the Senate Executive Board (comparable to a legislative conference committee), where the proposals are refined using suggestions from the three individual Senates. The Board of Trustees has the final authority to veto or amend policies recommended to it by the Superintendent/President, who serves as the chair of the Senate Executive Board. The Superintendent/President has the authority to change recommended procedures if she or he feels they are not in the college's best interests. Through the collegial governance system, the College of Marin has established committees; these include the Affirmative Action Committee, Employee Development Committee, Planning Committee, and Instructional Equipment Committee. Since the model's implementation, 42 policies and procedures have been recommended and approved. (WJT)

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COLLEGIAL GOVERNANCE AT COLLEGE OF MARIN: A GOVERNMENTAL MODEL

By

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ABSTRACT

College of Marin, a community college in Kentfield, California, has designed, developed and implemented an unusual model of collegial governance. It was designed by a task force that represented the entire college community and ensures that faculty, staff, and students have an equal right to participate effectively in recommending policies and procedures--the rules or "laws" by which employees and students live. The model is based on the country's governmental model; it has executive, legislative, and judicial branches.

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To be collegial means to be of the nature of, or constituted as, a college or body of colleagues. A colleague is a professional associate.

To govern means to exercise power or authority in controlling others. The word "govern" connotes as its end a keeping in a straight course or smooth operation for the good of the individual and the whole.

Merriam-Webster

Background About Collegial Governance

Most American colleges, including California community colleges, have had some form of collegial governance for many years. In 1962, J. D. Millett published the seminal book on the topic: The Academic Community: An Essay on Organization. Millett defined collegial governance as the sharing of authority or power and interest or values in a community of equals or scholars; i.e., the board sharing its legal authority and power, and the administration sharing the authority and power delegated to it by the board, with the faculty. In the sixties, students began demanding and getting their share of decision-making power as well. While the classic decision-making mode in collegial governance has always been consensus, faculty and student involvement in decision-making in the sixties was more political than collegial.

Background About College of Marin

College of Marin was founded in 1926. According to oral history, a form of collegial governance began to emerge in the fifties. Faculty committees met and made certain decisions, including hiring decisions. Faculty, as equals with administrators, also made

other kinds of decisions. The board either knowingly or unknowingly shared its legal authority and power, and the administration shared its authority and power delegated to it by the board, with the faculty. However, the collegial governance model that was in place in the fifties, sixties and seventies primarily was undocumented. In retrospect, individual faculty members do not agree on the College's governance system nor how effective it was.

A second college was founded in the Marin Community College District in the early seventies. The leadership of this new cluster-concept college, Indian Valley Colleges, designed, developed and implemented a formal and documented collegial governance system that involved faculty, administration, support staff, and students. In 1982, an accreditation team commended the Indian Valley Colleges' collegial governance system as a model among the western states' community colleges.

Four years earlier, several pieces of legislation were passed that were to have a profound impact upon California's community colleges: Proposition 13 and the Rodda Act. As a result of these two legislative acts, California's community college districts began to experience turbulent fiscal and political changes, regardless of the governance systems in place at their colleges. Both College of Marin and Indian Valley Colleges had their share of "bad old days" in the late seventies and early eighties. However, perhaps because Indian Valley had a written constitution and by-laws for its governance system, it experienced less disruption in that system than College of Marin.

In 1985, for financial reasons, the two colleges were merged into a one-college, multi-campus district. Students were served by one administration, one faculty, and one support staff. For several years thereafter, efforts were made to call the single college by a new name, Marin Community College. But the larger and more established of the two former colleges, College of Marin, dominated Marin County's perception of "the College" and in 1989 the official name of both campuses became College of Marin. The campus names became Kentfield Campus and Indian Valley Campus. In a similar evolution, the internal college community's perception of "the College" was dominated by the older and larger campus' oral-history version of how decisions were made.

The Board hired a permanent Superintendent of the District and President of the College in Fall 1985. She was greeted by a recently merged Academic Senate that was eager to sit down and discuss with her its views on collegial governance, and how faculty might once again participate in decision making.

Process of Building a Governance Model at College of Marin

As one of her first official acts, President Myrna R. Miller met with the Academic Senate at an Asilomar retreat. The President and the Senators discussed at some length the desire for faculty to be involved in decision making. The President pointed out that the important authority resides in developing the College's policies and procedures, i.e., the "rules" by which students and employees are to be governed. The discussion centered on the idea that the govern*ance* system at College of Marin should be similar to govern*ment*. For instance, the legislative branch of government passes laws that the public must live by. So, too, could the College's governance system pass policies and procedures that the college community would live by. The governance system, like the legislature, also could amend its existing policies and procedures. In this way, the college community would establish its own rules that all of its members would agree to follow; i.e., true self-government.

At the Academic Senate's request, the President agreed to appoint a task force that would develop and propose to the College community an appropriate governance model that would allow for faculty involvement. The Academic Senate and the President also agreed that the task force should have equal representation from each segment of the College community: students, support staff, faculty, and administration. The task force, whose members were elected by their peers, was composed of: Bob Essig, task force chairman, a permanent credit faculty member whose expertise was political science; Sylvia Campbell-Landman, a temporary noncredit faculty member; Jo Ellen Fitzgerald and Consuelo Segal, support staff; Sandra Douglass and Gerald Burroni, administration; Helen Carp, noncredit student; and Caroline Strotz, credit student. The task force met weekly for an entire year. Its actions were facilitated and recorded by Lorraine Barry, the College's staff development officer, who is a trained facilitator/recorder. The task force conducted an extensive literature search on collegial governance that included acquiring governance models used by other California community colleges. The task force also studied the numerous ad hoc committees that were currently functioning at the College to try to determine their purposes, and to whom and by what authority they made recommendations. It thoroughly discussed the strengths and weaknesses of each of the models it had acquired. The task force built a model, by consensus, that it believed would draw on the strengths of the best.

After its year-long effort, the task force brought forward its proposed model for

review and discussion by all college constituents. Through a series of open hearings, individuals and groups were invited to comment and make suggested changes. After this review process, the proposed model was put forward for a vote. Each of the groups approved the model by a simple majority vote. The President then forwarded the new governance model to the Board of Trustees for approval. It was approved unanimously, and officially adopted in June 1986.

College of Marin's Collegial Governance Model

In many ways, the model that was developed was a direct reflection of the process that was used to develop it: its cornerstone was equal representation. In Fall 1986, the College community began to implement the model, with the knowledge that there would be some refinement as it developed. In its wisdom, the task force had proposed a Governance Review Council that would periodically refine the model, much like the judicial branch of government.

The major components of the model are: an Academic Senate, a Classified Senate, a Student Senate, and a Senate Executive Board. Each of the three Senates has two major roles: (1) to review and recommend District policies and College procedures, and (2) to recommend appointments from its membership to College governance committees. The Senate Executive Board is composed of an equal number of representatives from each of the three Senates. It is chaired by the Superintendent/President who hears, firsthand, the concerns of each group as they hear hers.

Using the Model: Policies and Procedures

Any member of the College community (student, support staff, faculty, administrator, or trustee) can propose new or revised policies or procedures, including procedures to establish College committees. The proposal for a new or changed policy or procedure (comparable to a legislative bill, or initiative of a citizen group) first goes to a group named the Feasibility Study Group. This group simply comments on the proposal's legal or economic feasibility. The proposal, with the comments attached, is then forwarded to each of the three Senates for review and recommendation. Each Senate deliberates and makes recommendations for change from its own perspective. Once each of the three Senates has formulated its recommendation, the Senate Executive Board (comparable to a legislative conference committee) meets to refine wording, philosophy, or implementation,

as suggested by the three groups.

The key to the success of the College's collegial governance system is the Senate Executive Board. It is here that the true spirit of collegiality, consensus among colleagues, is achieved. The representatives of each group hear and learn about the needs and points of view of others, leading to compromise. It is here that the "straight course or smooth operation for the good of the individual and the whole" is attained. In its three-and-one-half years of operation, the Senate Executive Board has reached decisions by consensus forty times. Only twice, consensus could not be reached and a vote had to be taken.

The Board of Trustees has the final authority to veto or make changes to those policies recommended to it by the Superintendent/President. In that regard, it functions as the executive branch of government/governance. Because of broad participation in the process, the Board knows that policies that come before it for approval have full support of all the College's constituencies. To date, the Board has not found it necessary to veto or change any recommended policies.

The Superintendent/President has the authority to change procedures that have been recommended by the Senate Executive Board, if she believes that they are not in the best interests of the College. (Administrative procedures go forward to the Board for information only). To date, this also has not been necessary.

Using the Model: College Committees

During the past three-and-one-half years, the College community has established a number of College committees through the collegial governance system. Among them are the: Affirmative Action Committee, Budget Committee, Employee Development Committee, Instructional Equipment Committee, and Planning Committee. With the consent of the Classified and Student Senates, two committees have been established by the Superintendent/President in consultation with the Academic Senate only. The Superintendent/President decided that these two committees should be committees of the Academic Senate only, as contrasted to College committees, because new California Education Code language gave the Academic Senate a "primary" role in recommending academic standards and curriculum. These two committees--Academic Standards and Curriculum--do have representation, however, from support staff and students.

The procedures for these official governance committees establish their roles and responsibilities, numbers of members from each of the constituent groups, and voting criteria. In general, however, these governance groups have rarely voted. They make every effort to reach consensus and vote only as a last resort.

Relationship of Collegial Governance to Collective Bargaining

The College has three unions with which it collectively bargains wages, working conditions, and other related matters. To ensure that the collegial governance groups do not deal with matters that union officials believe fall within their authority to negotiate, copies of all proposed policies and procedures are sent to the union presidents. They are asked to respond if they see any conflict between the proposed policies and procedures and collective bargaining agreements. When such a conflict exists, the policy or procedure is withdrawn from the process until agreement is reached between the Superintendent/President and the union officials.

Role of Administrators in Collegial Governance

At first glance, it might appear that, other than the Superintendent/President, the administrators at the College have little opportunity to influence the development of District policies and College procedures. Administration can, and does, yield its influence. The caveat is that administration, other than the Superintendent/President, cannot block a proposed policy or procedure from being forwarded to the next step in the process.

The College's Management Council, composed of all administrators, is not yet an "official" part of the collegial governance model but likely will be soon. Shortly after implementing the Board-approved system, the President recognized that the model had disenfranchised some of the administrators. Because they were responsible for implementing the policies and procedures, all administrators needed to comment on proposed policies and procedures before they were entered into the system. It was not enough that they be reviewed only for economic or legal feasibility by the Feasibility Study Group, a representative group that also includes administrators. The Management Council is now the first group to review proposed policies and procedures so that its members can advise the President on problems they would have in implementing them. Also, each administrator has the same prerogative as any other member of the college community to

propose a new or revised policy or procedure. Administrators exercise this prerogative with great frequency.

Efficiency and Effectiveness of College of Marin's Collegial Governance Model

College of Marin's collegial governance model pre-dates the new California Education Code's mandate that California Community College District Boards of Trustees develop minimum standards to ensure faculty, staff, and students the right to participate effectively in district/college governance. The College has four-and-one-half-years of experience in the development and implementation of a collegial governance model in which faculty, staff and students participate in advising administration and the Board of Trustees.

How efficiently and effectively does College of Marin's model function? The College's Governance Review Council currently is in the process of evaluating the functioning of the system. It has not yet made its recommendations for change to the President.

In terms of efficiency, coordinating the College's collegial governance system is a complex task. The President's Executive Assistant, Kim Cortright, has half-time responsibility for its coordination. He ensures that the timelines are met, proposals, policies, and procedures are placed on the appropriate agendas, and governance committee appointments are made and confirmed by the President.

In terms of effectiveness, many faculty, support staff, and students support the system. Preliminary data collected by the Governance Review Council, through questionnaires and interviews with members of the Senates, indicate widespread support for the governance system from the Classified and Student Senates. These two Senates seem to feel that the governance system keeps them better informed and more involved in setting policy and procedures than before.

However, some members of the Academic Senate do not support the current system. These faculty were around in the fifties, sixties, and early seventies (before collective bargaining, Proposition 13, affirmative action legislation, and an increasingly litigious society) and remember the "good old days" when the faculty "made all the

decisions." For them, the current collegial governance system does not match their memories of the past nor their desires for the future.

Many students, support staff, faculty, and administrators show their support for the current system by volunteering their time to serve on committees, Senates, the Senate Executive Board, the Feasibility Study Group, and the Governance Review Council. The Academic Senate officers and the chairs of the Academic Standards and Curriculum Committees receive release time. Release time also is given to support staff to serve on committees; the Classified Senate meets during the lunch hour. Students earn College credit for their involvement. And everyone who participates benefits by becoming knowledgeable about proposed policies, procedures, plans and budgets. Each participant also earns the satisfaction of being able to influence the rules by which College employees and students are governed.

Another way of evaluating the model is to look at the results or outcomes of its operation. Since its implementation, forty-two policies and procedures have been recommended and approved. Ninety-five percent have been recommended collegially, by consensus. (Several proposals for policies or procedures were found to be illegal or not economically feasible by the Feasibility Study Group). In addition, College plans and budgets are recommended annually to the President by committees that represent the consensus viewpoint of students, support staff, faculty, and administration.

One final measure of effectiveness: the Marin Community College District's Board of Trustees and President Miller continue to give their full support to the College community's relatively new collegial governance process. That kind of top-level support demonstrates the belief that College of Marin's governmental model of collegial governance is greatly contributing to the smooth operation of the College.

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